

Radical Self Care Journal

SELF



MIND



BODY



SOUL



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* Please note throughout this journal we are using the word "soul" to capture something difficult to express - you may prefer to think of it as your identity or inner being, your essence or sense of self.

A New Direction began working with Dawn Estefan in 2021, during our Space for Change programme. Space for Change is a series of workshops designed to support the cultural sector in navigating the challenges it faces when working with children and young people. Dawn's session on Self Care was a watershed moment - it was as if we all breathed a collective sigh of relief as participants began to let out some of what they had been holding, supported to do so in Dawn's thoughtful small group process.

Dawn and I began dreaming up a way to share the power of this session more widely, and to support more arts professionals working with young people. The nature of participation and engagement practice means that it can often leave its practitioners feeling depleted because they are attending to the needs of everyone else on their programmes or in their teams. Even more so since 2020 and the ever-increasing pressures facing the creative sector.

Whilst we may recognise that it's essential to look after ourselves first, it is still often the thing that gets pushed to the bottom of the pile. Dawn gave our groups an invitation to truly understand what Radical Self Care is and the practical steps we can take towards it. It was the first time A New Direction has collaborated with a psychotherapist and the first time I actually understood what it means to care for yourself as a unique whole person.

Dawn has a brilliant way of helping people explore their inner world in a way that is both simple and deep. We think her inspiring work makes the process understandable for everyone, accessible and revelatory.

Corinne Micallef
Senior Programme Manager
A New Direction

Dawn Estefan

CREATIVE THOUGHT & THINKING

Award-inning psychoanalytic psychotherapist and trauma specialist Dawn Estefan has a passion for using psychoanalytic theory as a way of making sense of our lives and the world we live in. Her unorthodox approach to mental health and therapy, which focuses on the sharing and telling of stories to bring about social change, has seen her build relationships and collaborations with organisations, brands, and creatives from all backgrounds. As a **“thought leader”** Dawn uses creative thinking and thought as the two focal elements to shift stagnated narratives.

As a psychotherapist, Dawn is best known for her work with Black and Brown communities and as a mental health activist. Her private practice fondly known as the “The Black Girl Clinic” (although she now also works with Black and Brown people of all genders) focuses on the importance of understanding cultural nuance and intersectional identities when navigating wellness. Dawn’s cultural literacy guides her commitment to delivering both clinical interventions and public discussions which address the disparities and barriers to care in mental health.



OTHER PLATFORMS

With over 25 years of experience in the entertainment industry, Dawn introduced a platform called “Creative Minds” as part of her general practice, which focuses on the unique needs of those in the creative industries. Dawn is trustee on several boards and has also worked on several plays and documentaries in Latin America and the UK providing on- and off-set clinical advice on how to support staff, writers and cast in their work and performance.

“Organisation in the Mind” is a business psychology platform which challenges organisations to position “thinking” as opposed to “doing” as a way of tapping into the organisational unconscious. In her work Dawn uses psychoanalytic ideas, conversation, and storytelling to help her clients understand the significance of the unconscious on behaviour, creativity cultures and development in the workplace. Dawn believes that awareness of emotions, conflicts and identity allows people to be fully present at work and to effectively manage the complexity of individual and collective relationships as well as overall organisational mental health.

Introduction:

How to use this Journal

The “Radical Self Care Journal” is the beginning of a revolutionary discourse with the self. A guided conversation in which you are subtly encouraged to pay closer attention to your unique self and its needs.

We have created this journal with a lot of love for you, and the work you do for young people and others, as an intentional space to discover new ways of nourishing and nurturing your mental and physical well-being, to elevate your current practice, and to reflect on how this work can be expanded.

The journal is divided into four sections. Each section lends itself to different types of support needed for the self to flourish and thrive. Use your journal as an exploration of who you are to develop your own personalised Radical Self Care Toolkit. You are uniquely radical! The four sections – Self, Mind, Body and Soul – are there to help you understand your different needs, based on your own personal narrative, and experiences. There are invitations for you to rest, dance, sing, draw and express yourself. If you are busy, you’ll be relieved to hear that this is a ‘choose your own story’ format, which simply means that you choose where and when you want to begin, and how often you use this guide. We have worked hard to make it accessible and fun, so you can find your inner child and play through learning. There is no right or wrong way to use the journal – whatever you decide is the right thing for you!

We encourage you to focus on your well-being; and to identify, validate and accept the thoughts, feelings, and emotions that you experience as a human being. Give yourself space and time for honest reflection and for getting to know yourself better. Regular ritual can help to create moments of calm and positive experience.

There is a range of chapters and exercises in this journal, some of which are playful, as well as others that will lead you towards deeper personal reflection. If you feel the deeper reflections may not be helpful for you, especially during your working day, then please make your way to some of the lighter exercises - the journal is here to support you in whatever way feels best for you personally.

Throughout the journal we've given a suggestion of the amount of time each activity might take — short, long, longer. These are indicated with this icon:



— **short** i.e. less than 15 minutes



— **long** i.e. between 15–30 minutes



— **longer** i.e. more than 30 minutes

We hope that what you learn about yourself is transferable and transgenerational, so that it benefits you, and gives you some additional tools to pass onto the young people you encounter.

Be intentional!
Radical Self Care is about
caring for the self so that
you can care for others

**“Caring for myself is
not self-indulgence,
it is self-preservation,
and that is an act of
political warfare”**

Audre Lorde

Self care is ambiguous in its meaning and ontology. What is it? What does it look like? When we hear the term self care, what usually comes to mind is taking a bath, getting a massage, or any individual activity which can be considered a “treat.” Unfortunately, this, in combination with a growing wellness industry, perpetuates a system of caring for the self which is based on capitalism and consumerism, lacking a nuanced understanding of the impact of intersectional identities on self care choices.

The concept of Radical Self Care can be traced back to the scholarship of Black and Latinx feminists such as Gloria Anzaldua, bell hooks, and Audre Lorde, and was viewed as a tool for social justice and the survival of marginalised communities. It means caring as much about how you treat yourself, or allow yourself to be treated, as you care about the expectations of others. It is discovering the power within you to take drastic steps to protect your mental and physical well-being at all costs.

It is also a political act, because it recognises that the self is rooted in our political histories, narratives, and experiences; and that our differences are important when it comes to mental health and well-being. Radical Self Care is not a one size fits all, it involves proudly owning and directing our lives, choosing how we engage with our interconnected worlds, so that we can be unapologetically ourselves in the face of unrelenting pressure and expectations to be otherwise.

Radical Self Care includes these key elements:

- Boundary management and balance between work and personal life.
- Radical selection of your friends and support network, “Energy creators’ are friendships that support your personal liberation and are curious about your difference, people who accept and celebrate you for being you. “Energy vampires” are those who do the exact opposite!
- Prioritising your commitment to proactive mental and physical health.
- An unapologetic commitment to ditching your fear of disappointing others.
- Taking daily pauses when you feel overwhelmed.
- Being able to say no, even when it’s not easy and may affect someone or something you care about.
- Mindful awareness of choosing your heart over your head when your heart says yes and your mind says no.
- Reminding yourself that it’s impossible to give one hundred percent to everything, no matter how much you want to.

The value of your work doesn’t mean losing sight of your value as a human being. I acknowledge that you may feel conflicted about self care when you are working with communities struggling with ongoing systematic issues; but Radical Self Care can be a necessary part of the social change you seek. Centralising the self helps you create practices to become a better community member, leader and caregiver — and sustain the energy and spirit you need to do the job.

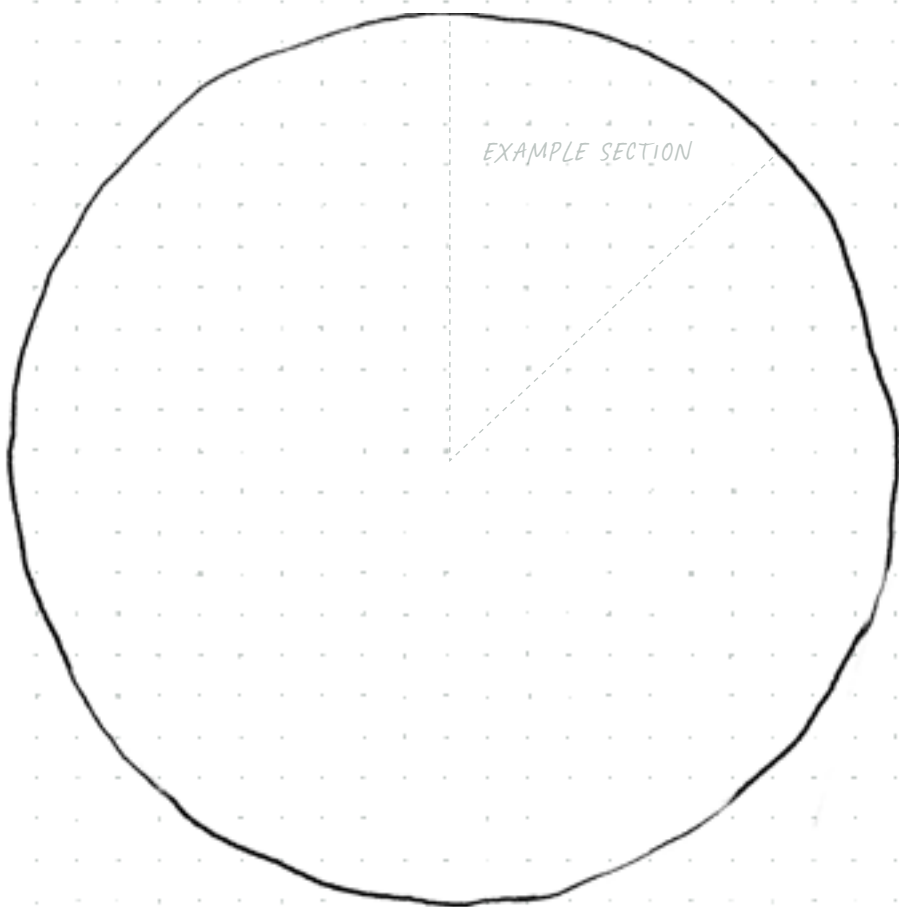
What can Radical Self Care look like in the workplace?

(Note: Radical Self Care looks different for everyone and may include these key elements)

- Make your mental wellness a top priority. Take steps to protect it daily, even if your organisation does not. Talk to the young people you work with to help them to create a legacy of the importance of self care in the creative industries.
- Make “me time” regularly. What would it look like if you treated those around you as you treat yourself – i.e. as if you didn’t have time to care for them? What would happen to the young people you work with? You are worthy of the care you give to others.
- Make sure you speak up if you feel mistreated at work, to someone you trust e.g a colleague, your line manager.
- Do not make career decisions that compromise your mental health, but advocate wherever you can for your well-being. This also sets a great example for the young people you work with, when talking to them about the power of their voices.
- Create clear guidelines! Setting firm and healthy boundaries helps increase feelings of self-empowerment, as well as healthier relationships. Boundaries at work are not just for young people.
- Make sure you maintain a close, strong support system. Enlist your trusted people to lean on in times of turmoil, and encourage the young people that you work with to do the same.



Reflect on an average day and how you spend your time. Try to make a rough estimation of how you balance your time. Add lines that divide the circle below into sections, a bit like slices of cake. Each section should represent your activities. For example, time spent on gadgets, time resting or time to yourself. Don't worry about getting each section exactly right.



Once complete, think about how you can create more space for practices that nourish you, so you get a bigger part of the cake.

Give space and time to how you feel



There are no correct ways to answer these questions. They are simply an invitation for self-reflection where it may feel helpful. Answer as many as you want, however you like.

DATE:

TODAY MY MIND IS

TODAY MY BODY IS

TODAY MY SOUL IS

TODAY'S COMMITMENT TO MYSELF IS

HOW WAS MY ENERGY TODAY?

THINGS I DID WELL

THINGS THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER

REFLECTING ON MY MIND, BODY AND SOUL TODAY

TODAY'S WATER INTAKE





**I'm going to be
exactly who I want
to be...**

A large rectangular area with a dotted background and a thick red border, intended for writing.



SELF
Handprint graphic

Self

Your sense of self refers to your perception of the characteristics that define you. Personality traits, abilities, likes and dislikes, moral codes, cultural expectations, and upbringing all contribute to your unique identity as a human being. Few of us consciously spend time thinking about who we are: you would be surprised how many people struggle to name more than a few characteristics that wholly describe them. With each social role we adopt — parent, sibling, child — our behaviour changes to fit the expectations of others, and the communities we come from. Many of us sit uncomfortably within a self, without curiosity or interrogation.

It can be tough out there. You may feel it's impossible to meet all the demands placed on you. You may lose sight of yourself when the needs of others are such a focal part of your work. This is a systemic problem in the creative industries, where unhealthy working hours, slashed budgets, low or unpaid work and going above and beyond are all normalised.



How do industry standards lead you away from your self?

When we are encouraged to display our personalities without shame or guilt, we can develop a strong sense of self

Individuation, or the process through which we develop a unique self, begins in childhood. To individuate successfully, children need room to explore, learn, and express their needs and desires. If our attempts at self-expression earn only criticism or punishment from parents, friends, or anyone else, we might respond by ignoring our internal sense of self. It may seem safer and more beneficial to reshape ourselves into someone more easily accepted.

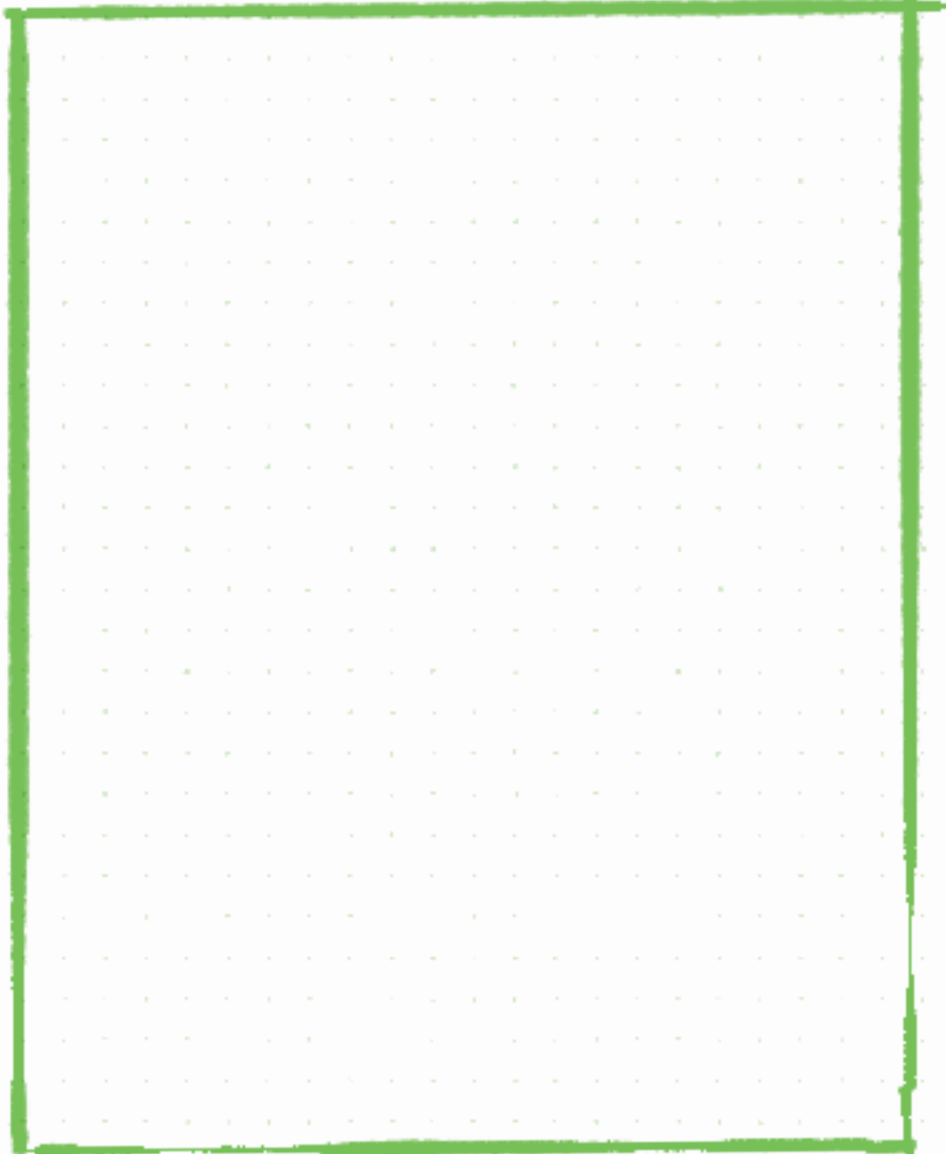
You're not perfect, nor should you be, but you are still amazing! Understanding yourself makes it easier to address the aspects you may perhaps feel dissatisfied with. Lacking a clearly defined sense of self often makes it difficult to know exactly what you want, as opposed to what others want from you. This in turn can lead to a profound sense of discontent as you struggle to identify the source of your unhappiness, even when there is nothing obviously wrong.

Knowing who you are, coupled with a freedom to express yourself, allows you to live with purpose, make better choices in life, develop satisfying relationships, improve self-worth, and develop an acceptance of the entire self. All these can contribute to your overall emotional and physical health.



Connect with your unique identity

Your handprints and finger prints are unique to you. Rub your hands or fingers in any substance that will make a mark – chalk/ earth/ paint – and then press down on the page! This is you, and you alone.





When you tell your story it's important to tear out all the pages that were written by someone else until you get to the first page that was written by you

Who am I?

Create a picture/representation of your self on the blank page. Don't worry about your skill as a portraitist, use a colour, words or even a collage. Express yourself in the way you want to!





Who was I told I should be?

Create a written response exploring your story.

Tips for Exploring Your Story

WHEN FILLING IN THIS PAGE, CONSIDER THINGS SUCH AS SOCIETAL, CULTURAL, FAMILY AND BINARY GENDER NORMS.

**Now find a jumbo marker and block out the words
'Who was I told I should be?'**



What stops me from being who I know I am?

**What can I manage within that?
What is within my control?**

Self Check In

What are my values?

Do I live my life according to these values?

**Do my choices reflect my own interests
or someone else's?**

**Do I say yes to make others happy? If so, what
support can I find to set different boundaries?**

Tips:

- ASK FOR MORE TIME TO THINK BEFORE RESPONDING TO REQUESTS
- CREATE BALANCE! YOU MAY FEEL THAT PEOPLE MIGHT APPRECIATE/ LIKE YOU MORE IF YOU SAY YES BUT THAT CAN OFTEN LEAD TO YOU SAYING NO TO YOURSELF MORE OFTEN THAN YOU WOULD LIKE TO CREATE BALANCE YOU ALSO NEED TO SAY YES TO YOU FROM TIME TO TIME AND SHOW SOME APPRECIATION FOR YOURSELF!
- NOT ALL YES'S ARE EQUAL! SAYING YES TO THE RIGHT THINGS RATHER THAN EVERYTHING CAN FEEL MUCH MORE REWARDING!
- SETTING FIRMER BOUNDARIES IS A GREAT WAY OF COMMUNICATING YOUR LIMITS TO OTHERS



I was always so afraid of people saying “Who does that person think they are?” but really I was afraid to say “This is who I am”

It’s me or you!

What are you afraid will happen if you choose your self?



Your health and wellness matter! Taking care of yourself is a radical and necessary part of social change. Perhaps think of yourself as a marathon runner: you cannot make it to the beginning or the end of the race if you haven't trained, rested, hydrated; you have to be in the best shape to run the course ahead. When you attend to your own needs, you can care for others'.

Make a list of ways that might help you choose your self, taking into consideration the analogy of the marathon runner. You may wish to revisit this page a later date to reflect.



Time to update

Sometimes we forget to update who we are. Not only do we get stuck in the belief systems that society places us within, we can also find ourselves trapped by the way that others see us, and the way we see ourselves.

What identities and beliefs do you have to let go of?

Now tear this page out (or find another piece of paper to write them on), make a paper plane, and throw it out a window!





Fear is what you feel, bravery is what you do

Write a letter to your fears





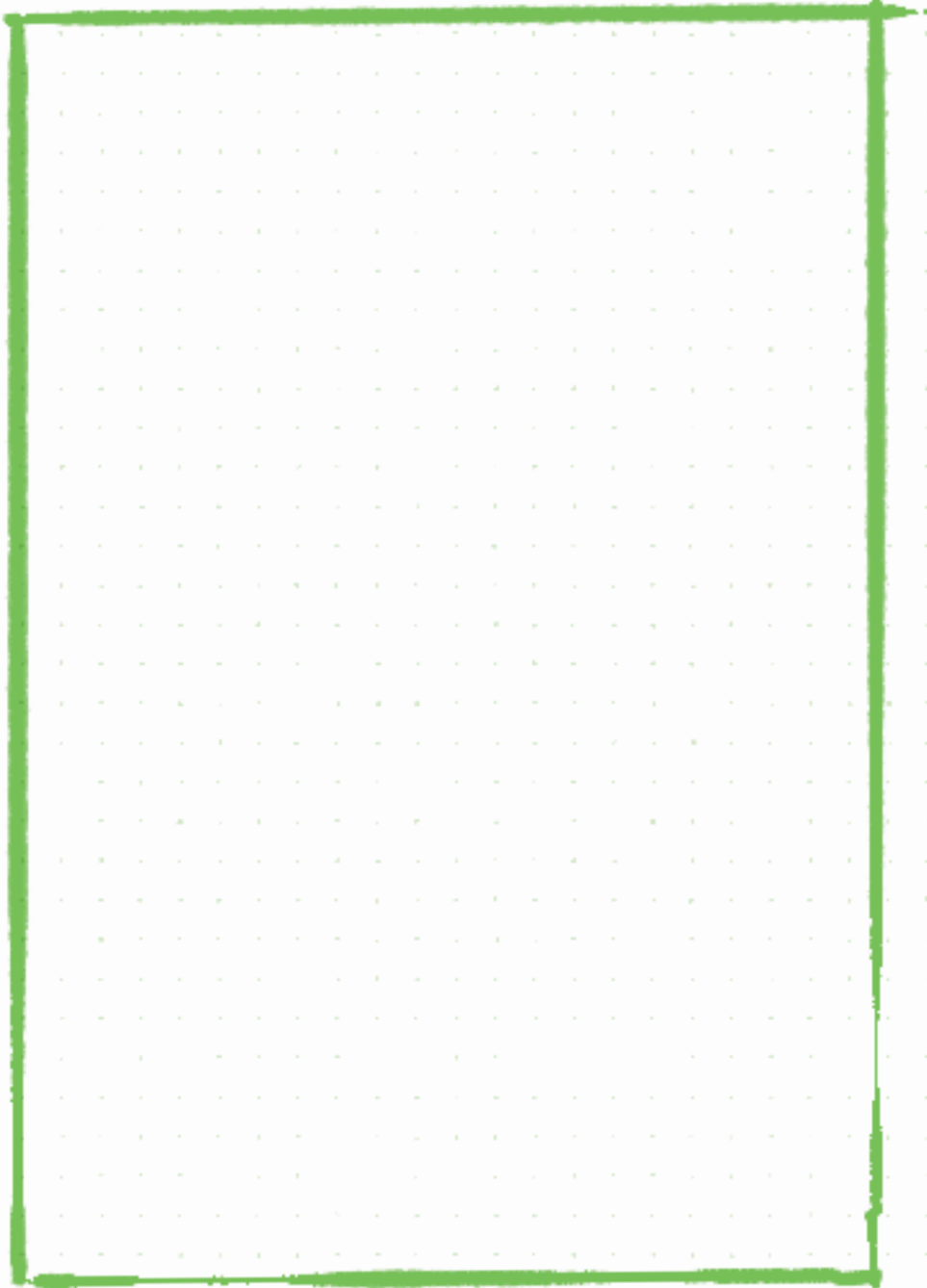
**What is the bravest thing
you have ever done?**

What did you learn about your self?



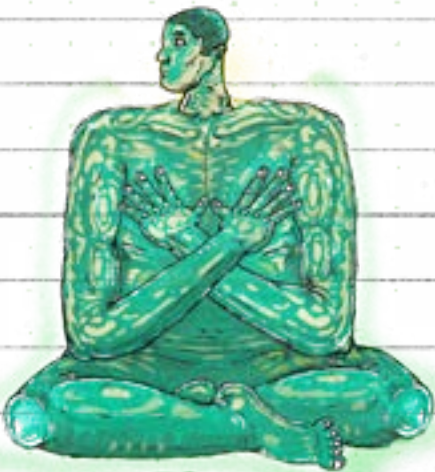


Draw yourself as a superhero





What are your superpowers and how do they serve you?





Now list how they serve the young people you work with



How much of yourself are you able to bring to your work?

Does your perception of your professional identity challenge or restrict your self and self-expression?

How does this impact your work?

How have familial and societal environments shaped the identities of the young people you work with?

- How does race, religion or class affect their ability to fit into wider society?
- How might their sexual identity be received or understood by their communities?
- How might gender norms be enforced in their communities?
- How might the arts be perceived by the communities they come from?
- The social model of disability is that people are disabled by the environments in which they live. How might different communities view those with additional needs?
- Is neurodivergence understood at home?
- What might you have to do to find authentic answers to these questions?

Bringing your self-awareness to your work can improve positive outcomes for young people. You become more aware of why you do what you do, and more conscious of your thoughts as well as your emotions, behaviours and actions. You will also become critically alert to the range of internal and external forces that influence your responses to the young people you work with.

Knowing your strengths and weaknesses is essential for young people to develop trust in you. When trust is established, positive outcomes are more likely. You are the strongest and best tool in your professional toolbox.



Reflect on your self in relation to your work with young people.

What makes you good at what you do?

By whose definition?

What makes a good practitioner in your field?

How can you help young people develop self-expression, exploration and acceptance?

Personal Boundaries

Personal boundaries are the mental, emotional, and physical walls we create to protect ourselves from being used, drained or manipulated by others. These limits help us to distinguish who we are and what we need from other people and their needs. They help us to create a safe container within ourselves where self-compassion and self care can blossom. Creating personal boundaries helps to preserve our personal integrity.

Work Boundaries

Answering texts or emails after work hours? Working long hours with no break? Being accessible 24/7? Fearing shutting off your phone in case a crisis emerges? Creating sustainable boundaries between your life and your work can be a challenge.

Work-related boundaries help define how much of yourself you give to your work, and guide how you form relationships with colleagues and clients.

**Boundaries separate
what you feel and think
from the thoughts
and feelings of others**

Healthy boundaries can make the difference between professional fulfilment and burn out. They protect you from overcommitting or behaving in unethical ways. Work with young people depends on developing trusting, respectful and voluntary relationships. These relationships must be open and honest, to support young people's personal, social and educational development – to some extent the boundaries you put in place have to shift and evolve rather than be fixed. Critical reflection on who you are and on your practice is also required to ensure those boundaries are appropriate for you and for others.

Creating healthy boundaries at work can be particularly difficult. There may be real concerns around how to balance stakeholder agendas and the processes and procedures of the job without losing connection to the young people you work with, or your commitment to community.

But with clear communication and practice you can learn to set self-honouring limits without alienating those you work with or compromising authenticity.



Tips for Managing Boundaries:

- A HEALTHY BOUNDARY IS A FLEXIBLE ONE THAT ALLOWS YOU TO EXERCISE CONTROL OVER WHAT YOU LET IN WITHOUT MAKING YOU OVERLY DEFENSIVE OR RESISTANT TO CHANGE.
- REMIND YOURSELF THAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO HAVE BOUNDARIES.
- YOUR WORK IN EMPOWERING YOUNG PEOPLE SHOULD NOT RESULT IN YOUR OWN OPPRESSION.
- EXPLORE YOUR OWN NEEDS AND HOW THEY CAN BE MET, SO THEY DON'T OBSCURE THE NEEDS OF THE YOUNG PEOPLE YOU WORK WITH.
- LEARN TO SAY 'NO'.
- IDENTIFY AND SPEAK OUT WHEN PEOPLE OVERSTEP YOUR BOUNDARIES.
- REMEMBER THAT AUTHENTIC COMMUNICATION DOES NOT MEAN YOU HAVE TO DISCLOSE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOURSELF. YOU CAN KEEP A PART OF YOU FOR YOU.
- TRY TO PROTECT YOURSELF FROM OVERCOMMITTING. YOU CAN'T DO IT ALL AND THAT HAS TO BE OK.
- APPROACH BOUNDARY SETTING WITH GENTLENESS AND SELF-COMPASSION.
- PLEASE TRY TO PRIORITISE SELF CARE! WHERE WOULD THE YOUNG PEOPLE BE WITHOUT YOU?!

What beliefs and ideas about your self, commitment and community make it difficult for you to set boundaries?

What are you willing to do to challenge those beliefs?



Drawing the Line

Draw a line down the middle of the page. On one side of the line list your needs i.e. the things that you feel are necessary to live a healthier life and maintain wellness at work. On the other side list your non-negotiables: This list should reflect the ways in which you will aim to protect your needs to create the self care boundaries that keep you healthy enough to do your job.

Give space and time to how you feel



There are no correct ways to answer these questions. They are simply an invitation for self-reflection where it may feel helpful. Answer as many as you want, however you like.

DATE:

TODAY MY MIND IS

TODAY MY BODY IS

TODAY MY SOUL IS

TODAY'S COMMITMENT TO MYSELF IS

HOW WAS MY ENERGY TODAY?

THINGS I DID WELL

THINGS THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER

REFLECTING ON MY MIND, BODY AND SOUL TODAY

TODAY'S WATER INTAKE







MIND



Mind

Defining the mind is a surprisingly difficult task. Some call it the 'seat of consciousness,' or even 'the essence of your being.' However you want to define it, the mind is the epicentre of your overall well-being — an incredibly powerful and individually made tool. It is the place where memories, emotions, and all the important data about who you are and who you will become, are stored.

In simple terms, a healthy mind equates to your mental health. A combination of your emotional, psychological, and social well-being, which in turn affects how you think, feel, and behave.

Despite the role mental health plays in every aspect of our lives, we often prioritise physical health. The link between mental health and physical health is generally misunderstood, because the mind and the body are considered to be two separate entities. But it is important that we understand that the two are in constant communication with one another. Think about it: depression can come with fatigue and headaches. When we are stressed, our hearts pound faster and our breath quickens. A healthy mind makes the body work better, and a healthy body improves mental well-being.

Some of the positive impacts of being mentally healthy include:

- improved general well-being,
- improved sense of life meaning and purpose,
- improved self-confidence and self-esteem,
- improved productivity,
- improved energy levels,
- improved coping mechanisms,
- the ability to balance work and play, rest and activity,
- decreased risk of mental illness,
- better decision making,
- promotion of a strong immune system,
- the flexibility to learn new things and adapt to change,
- the ability to build and maintain fulfilling relationships, and
- the ability to deal with stress and bounce back from adversity.

**Our minds are
beautiful, complex,
and individual.**

Time to Take a Dump!

A mind dump is a way to untangle your mind. It is simply the act of dumping all the contents of your mind onto a blank page in the same way you might dump the contents of a bag onto a table. It's like opening a valve in your mind and letting your stressors, nagging thoughts, mental clutter and annoyances flow out onto a piece of paper.

Key Tips:

- Let the contents of your mind flow onto the page, no matter how silly they seem. That way they won't clutter up your mind!
- Your writing doesn't have to make sense.
- It doesn't have to be neat.
- Don't judge the thoughts.
- It doesn't have to follow any particular order.
- Stop if you feel overwhelmed.
- Write until you feel the pressure inside you has lessened.



Dump it Now!

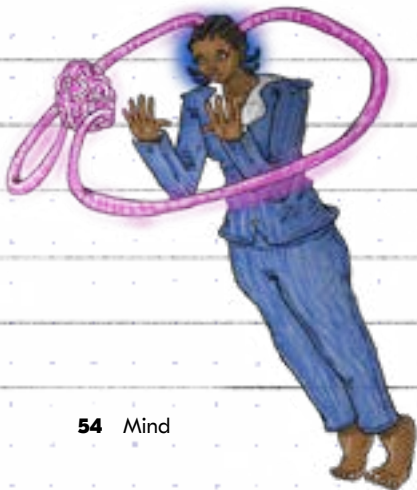
Set a timer for 1 minute. Place your pen on the page and write down everything that comes to your mind.

Now take a big breath and congratulate yourself. You have taken your first dump!



Reflections

At some point later return to your brain dump. Skim your list of thoughts first. See if any patterns jump out at you. Are certain thoughts related to each other? Is one specific topic more on your mind than anything else? Decide on a system of marking these related thoughts (underlining, starring and circling all work well). Then use the patterns as headings for reflection, thinking about responses and actions that might help with what has emerged.



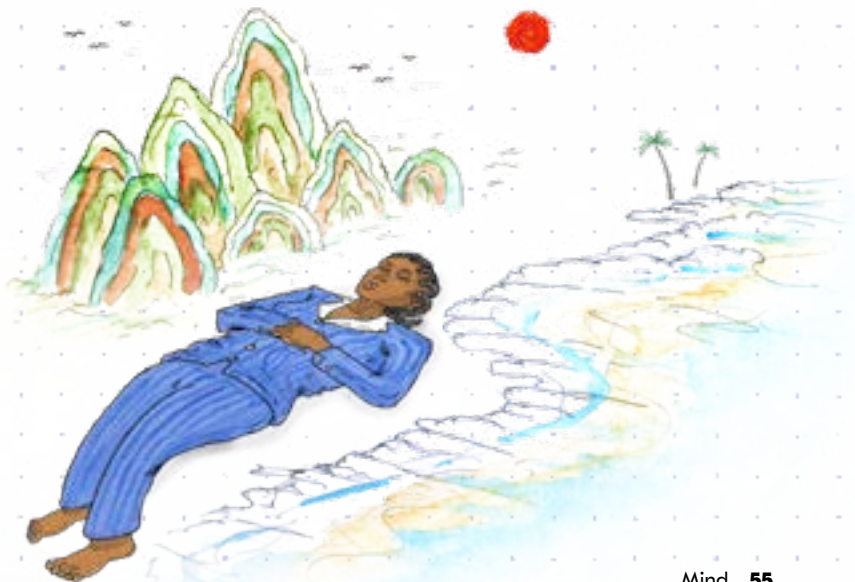
Affirmations

When we bring our negative thoughts to our conscious minds, we are able to challenge them. If we accept with compassion that our thoughts influence the way we feel and act, we stand a better chance of changing them. One of the ways that we can do this is by creating personal affirmations which speak to our selves and our stories.

Affirmations are positive, proactive and meaningful words that help to change our mindset. They help to purify our thoughts and restructure our minds to think in a more positive way. They are catalysts of positive behaviour, language, and action.

The simple habit of reading an affirmation a day acts as a powerful resilience tool. Instead of being afraid or imprisoned by our own words or thoughts we can be empowered by them.

This exercise is useful to do with the young people you work with as a way of helping them to connect to themselves, and as part of their creative process.





Write down 7 affirmations in the boxes below that challenge the negative thoughts you have inside.

I AM
ENOUGH

You discover your self in the present moment

The nature of the mind is to think, analyse, and figure things out: left to its own devices, the mind will constantly seek out new stimuli. During difficult times you can feel as if it is in a spin. Mindfulness gently retrains the mind to clear your thoughts, settle into the present moment, and focus on your awareness, bypassing the intellectual or conceptual and allowing you to be fully immersed in, and at one with, the present moment. This experience is what is known as true presence.

I haven't got time for this!

Yes, you have!

- Choose an activity to do mindfully throughout the day for one, two or five minutes. This activity can be something you would do normally, such as drinking a cup of tea, walking, or eating lunch. Try to really focus on what you are doing.
- Whatever you choose to do, be in the present. See, hear, smell, touch, feel and breathe in the moment.
- Notice whenever other thoughts or sensations come to mind. Acknowledge them, and let them go. Then refocus on your chosen mindful activity.
- Be patient and compassionate with yourself. You are doing wonderfully.



Place your hands on your stomach, close your eyes and focus on your breathing for two minutes, simply noticing the rise and fall of your belly as you breathe in and out.

Mindful wake up

You are the priority today! When you wake up, resist the urge to check your phones and emails.

Instead...

Sit up in bed in a relaxed position. Make sure your spine is straight but not rigid. Close your eyes and try to connect with the sensations in your body.

Take three long deep nourishing breaths. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Let your breath settle into its own rhythm, noticing the rise and fall of your chest and belly as you follow the breath.

Ask yourself: How do I feel? Use the following prompts to help answer the question.



Ask yourself: How do I feel?

Use the following prompts to help answer the question.

- What do I need to take better care of my self today?
- How might I show up today to have the best impact?
- What boundaries do I want to strengthen and develop?
- During difficult moments, how might I be more compassionate towards others and myself?
- How might I feel more connected and fulfilled?

Open your eyes and choose an affirmation for the day

Check in with yourself throughout the day. Pause.

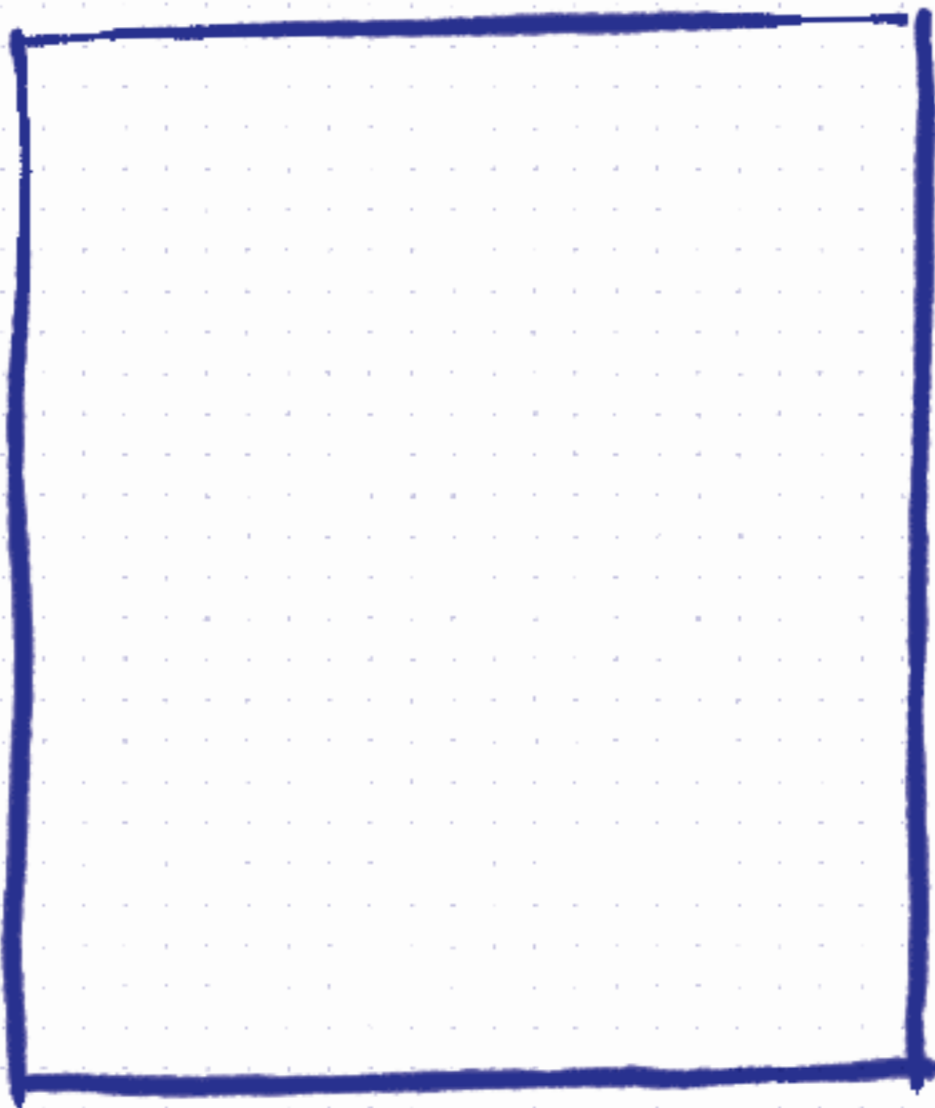
Take a breath, and revisit your affirmation.





I allow my mind to flow through my pen

Take your pencil or pen for a walk on the page for one minute. Move it slowly around the page smoothly and randomly, focusing on the shapes you are creating the whole time. Don't let the pencil or pen leave the page until the time is up.



“The worst enemy to creativity is the critical voice”

Sylvia Plath

Probably all of you have been gripped by the tyranny of the inner critic, so let's have a look at what it is.

The critical voice is a well-integrated pattern of destructive thoughts toward our selves and others. The nagging “voices,” or thoughts, that make up this internalized dialogue are at the root of much of our self-destructive and maladaptive behaviour.

The critical inner voice is not an auditory hallucination; it is experienced as real thoughts within our heads. This stream of destructive thoughts forms an anti-self that discourages us from acting in our best interest. It is an internal enemy that can affect every aspect of our lives, including self-esteem, confidence, personal and intimate relationships, and, most of all, performance and accomplishments. Negative thoughts affect us by undermining our positive feelings about ourselves and others. We unwittingly identify with the inner critic, which is a form of befriending it, and in doing so, we adopt the inner critic's values and become its agents.



Where the inner critic comes from...

Those Close to Us

These inner voices usually come from early life experiences that have been taken in and integrated as a way of thinking about the self. They might come from our parents or primary care givers, peers, siblings, or influential adults. Over time we pick up on the negative attitudes of those around us towards us as individuals, but also perhaps towards themselves.

The inner critic moves us away from our authentic self and aids the development of an impoverished version of the self which can be perpetuated or reenforced by future negative encounters. It is important to remember that just as positive childhood experiences can lead to confidence, ability, and optimism, negative experiences can lead to low self-esteem, self-destructive behaviours, and pessimism.

Societal, Cultural & Political Influences

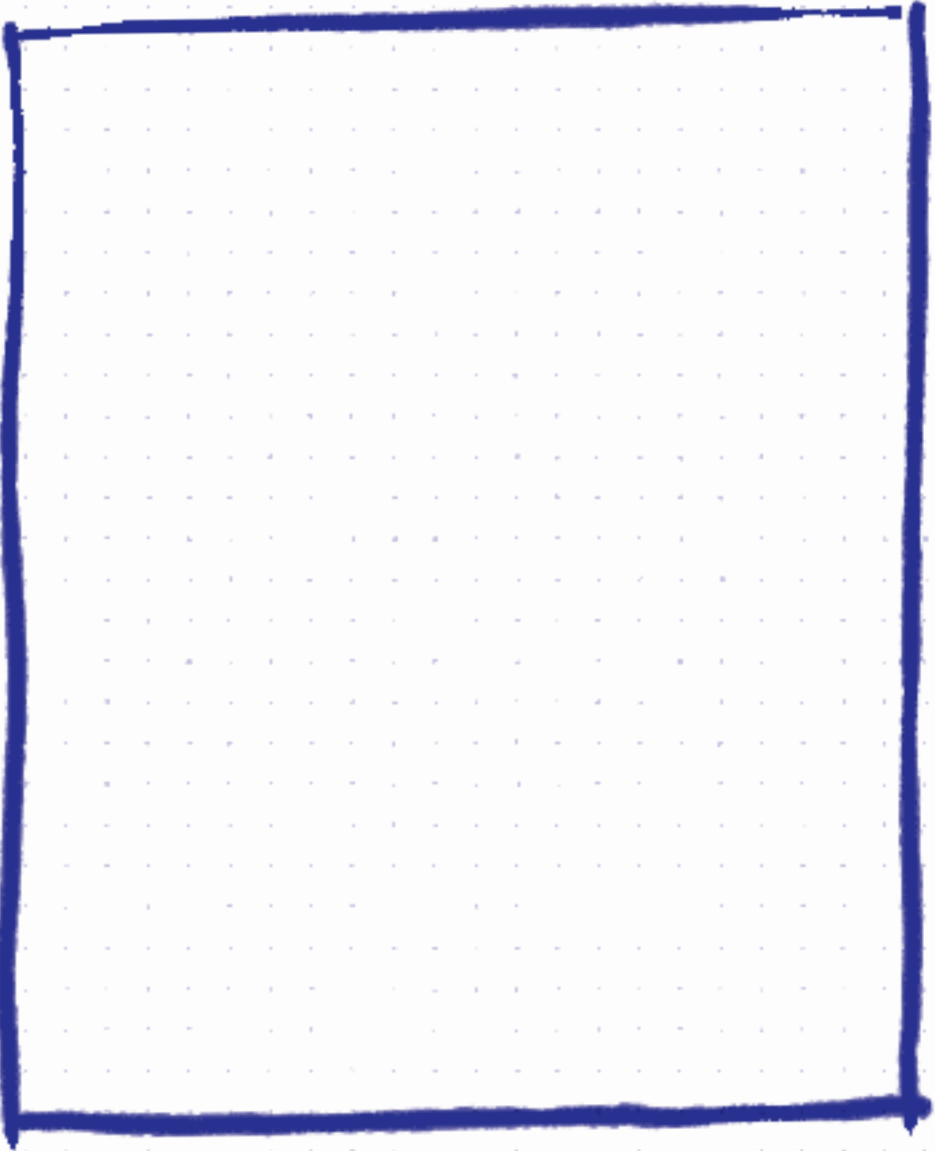
Now reflect on what society and cultural identity told you that you could or could not be. What generational ideals have been passed onto you that limit you? And most importantly, how much of this have you held onto in your adult years?

Your mind is always doing things that you are unaware of. When you are exposed to something over and over again, it becomes embedded in your unconscious and speaks to you in everything that you say and do.



**I will not let anyone walk
through my mind with
their dirty feet**

**Design a monster which depicts your inner critic,
then cover it with positive thoughts about yourself**



How to combat and reframe that voice.

Everyone you encounter has their own psychological wounds, which govern their behaviours, and which they pass on to you. The critical voice can stem from poor responses to tasks attempted, continuous teasing about capabilities, punitive forms of corrections, comparisons to peers or siblings, etc.

All these things build a foundation for the younger self. Depending on later interactions, the unconscious mind will store this information, look for reinforcements of these negative thoughts, and then create defence mechanisms that are seemingly there to protect you.

You had no choice about who you had to listen to in your formative years, but now you have more agency. You can retrain your mind, by getting better at spotting how it was indoctrinated in the first place. Your feelings have a past but don't necessarily have to be the future.

Tips for Managing the Inner Critic

- CHANGE THE CYCLE: REMEMBER THAT NEGATIVE SELF TALK IS NOT EVIDENCE OF SOMETHING BEING 'WRONG' WITH US THAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED - IT IS A FEATURE OF BEING HUMAN.
- USE THERAPY AS A WAY OF EXPLORING THE SELF. SOMETIMES WE NEED HELP TO UNPACK OUR THOUGHTS TO DISCOVER WHAT LIES WITHIN OUR UNCONSCIOUS. THAT WAY WE CAN CHALLENGE NOT ONLY THE VOICE, BUT ALSO WHO WE HAVE BECOME AS A RESULT OF OUR EXPERIENCES. WHAT AND WHERE ARE THE ORIGINAL WOUNDS AND WHO PLACED THEM THERE? ALL THESE QUESTIONS CAN BE EXPLORED IN THE THERAPEUTIC PROCESS. YOU DON'T ONLY HAVE TO GO TO THERAPY WHEN YOU ARE IN CRISIS.
- WE HAVE ADDED A LIST OF SUGGESTIONS AND SIGNPOSTS FOR THERAPY AT THE END OF THE JOURNAL. PLEASE BE SURE TO EXERCISE DUE DILIGENCE WHEN CHOOSING PRACTITIONERS AND THERAPISTS. YOU MAY WISH TO ASK FRIENDS TO HELP YOU RESEARCH AND FIND A THERAPEUTIC MODEL THAT WORKS FOR YOU. I WOULD AT THIS POINT LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THERAPY IS NOT ACCESSIBLE TO ALL. WE RECOGNISE THAT LONG NHS WAITING LISTS, COST, AND TIME IN A LONG WORKING DAY ARE ALL BARRIERS TO ACCESS. THERE ARE SEVERAL ALTERNATIVES TO TALK THERAPIES, SOME TO CONSIDER MIGHT BE: MUSIC & GONG THERAPY; EMDR; ART THERAPY; SAND TRAY THERAPY; DANCE AND MOVEMENT THERAPY; SOMATIC THERAPY; NATURE THERAPY.
- TO RETRAIN YOURSELVES, YOU NEED OTHER PEOPLE. PEOPLE WHO LOVE YOU AND FILL YOUR MIND WITH KINDER PERSPECTIVES. YOU NEED TO DARE TO LEAN ON THEM (NOT AN EASY MOVE FOR PEOPLE WHO FEEL UNDESERVING IN THE FIRST PLACE), AND ASK FOR THEIR HELP IN TAMING THE CRITICAL INNER VOICE. PERHAPS BE CURIOUS ABOUT WHY YOUR FIRST IMPULSE IS TO FORGIVE THE CRITIC AND BLAME YOURSELF.



Many of us may have become adept at avoiding uncomfortable or unpleasant emotions – whether because we are distracted by our busy lives, or because we are simply unable to cope with what we might find. The first steps towards self-compassion are to sit with the discomfort of getting to know the inner critic, and to have awareness of our inner world:

What triggers feelings of anger, disgust or shame?

How do you instinctively react to those feelings?

What blocks or resistance do you feel?

What is the content (and tone) of your internal monologue?

In order to even see that you've got a self-critic, you need to become a wise observer. Everybody makes mistakes. They do not define you — they make you who you are today. Thank yourself. Try not to keep replaying them, but to find the lessons in the lows, and the joys in the highs.

Think about the language you use around yourself, even casually in everyday settings. Calling yourself stupid, or an idiot, in jest, or when you make a mistake, helps to reinforce the critical voice. If you could step out of your self and observe, would you like someone else to speak to you in this way?

Examine the evidence: are the criticisms true? Can you find evidence of that truth. Are you really useless, stupid, a failure — or is there anything you know about yourself that can question these negative thoughts, and help to paint a more accurate version of who you are? Cherry-pick your own fine qualities. If you don't like what you see, what do you need to learn to grow? You're fluid. You're evolving.

To doubt oneself is to be human and can be fuel for growth —not for surrender.

Seek out positive energy! Choose people who help you to cultivate creativity and rewrite the negativity of self-doubt. Are there any changes that you need to make?



Be aware of when your inner critic appears. Identify places, times, events, and people that may trigger your inner critic's voice. This will help you prepare for its onset. If you have done therapy or are aware of why the triggers occur, you can reason with yourself, and come up with strategies to alter these negative behavioural patterns.

**Be curious when you hear that voice.
Ask yourself about it.**

- Is there someone in your past who used to tell you the same things?
- Where else was that voice reflected?
- How did that voice affect you then?
How does it affect you now?
- What are the outdated beliefs that you still hold?



Tips for Self Esteem

- DON'T DEFLECT COMPLIMENTS - PRACTICE RECEIVING THEM AND HOLDING ON.
- BUILD A COMMUNITY OF KINDRED SUPPORTERS.
- USE SOCIAL MEDIA WITH AWARENESS.
- CELEBRATE THE SMALL WINS.
- ELIMINATE SELF CRITICISM AND INTRODUCE SELF COMPASSION.
- IDENTIFY YOUR COMPETENCIES AND CELEBRATE THEM.
- USE POSITIVE AFFIRMATIONS.
- PRACTICE BEING ASSERTIVE.

Let It R.A.I.N

Self-Compassion

Self-compassion is no different from the compassion you show others. It is the ability to treat your self with kindness, understanding and acceptance. Take a minute to think about the compassion you offer to the young people you work with. Now, imagine how it would feel to give this warmth, acceptance and acknowledgement back to yourself. That feeling you are experiencing is self-compassion!

Tips for Self-Compassion

THE ACRONYM RAIN IS AN EASY TO REMEMBER TOOL FOR PRACTICING MINDFULNESS AND COMPASSION USING THE FOLLOWING FOUR STEPS:

Recognize (R) what is happening in your body and mind – the anxious thoughts and feelings; the tension that might exist in your face, jaw, or shoulders.

Allow (A) what is happening, without judgment. You don't have to like how you are feeling, but try to allow it to be, without the intention to fix or change anything.

Investigate (I) the feelings. Find out more about what you are feeling and where it is coming from. Ask your mind what it fears, then ask yourself what you need to feel more settled.

Nurture (N) the anxious parts of you. Speak to them and remind them that they are okay, safe, and loved. Give yourself the comfort that you need.

This exercise is useful to do with the young people you work with as a way of helping them to connect to themselves, and as part of their creative process.



Positive Mind List

A positive mind list is anything that you do, or need, to nourish and restore your mind. For example:

- 1 I ACCEPT THAT DESPITE MY BEST EFFORTS AND INTENTIONS
SOMETIMES THINGS DON'T GO THE WAY I PLANNED - AND THAT'S OK.
- 2 IT'S OK FOR ME TO SLOW DOWN.
- 3 IT'S OK FOR ME TO TAKE A BREAK, CHANGE DIRECTION,
OR EVEN START AGAIN.
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10

Give space and time to how you feel



There are no correct ways to answer these questions. They are simply an invitation for self-reflection where it may feel helpful. Answer as many as you want, however you like.

DATE:

TODAY MY MIND IS

TODAY MY BODY IS

TODAY MY SOUL IS

TODAY'S COMMITMENT TO MYSELF IS

HOW WAS MY ENERGY TODAY?

THINGS I DID WELL

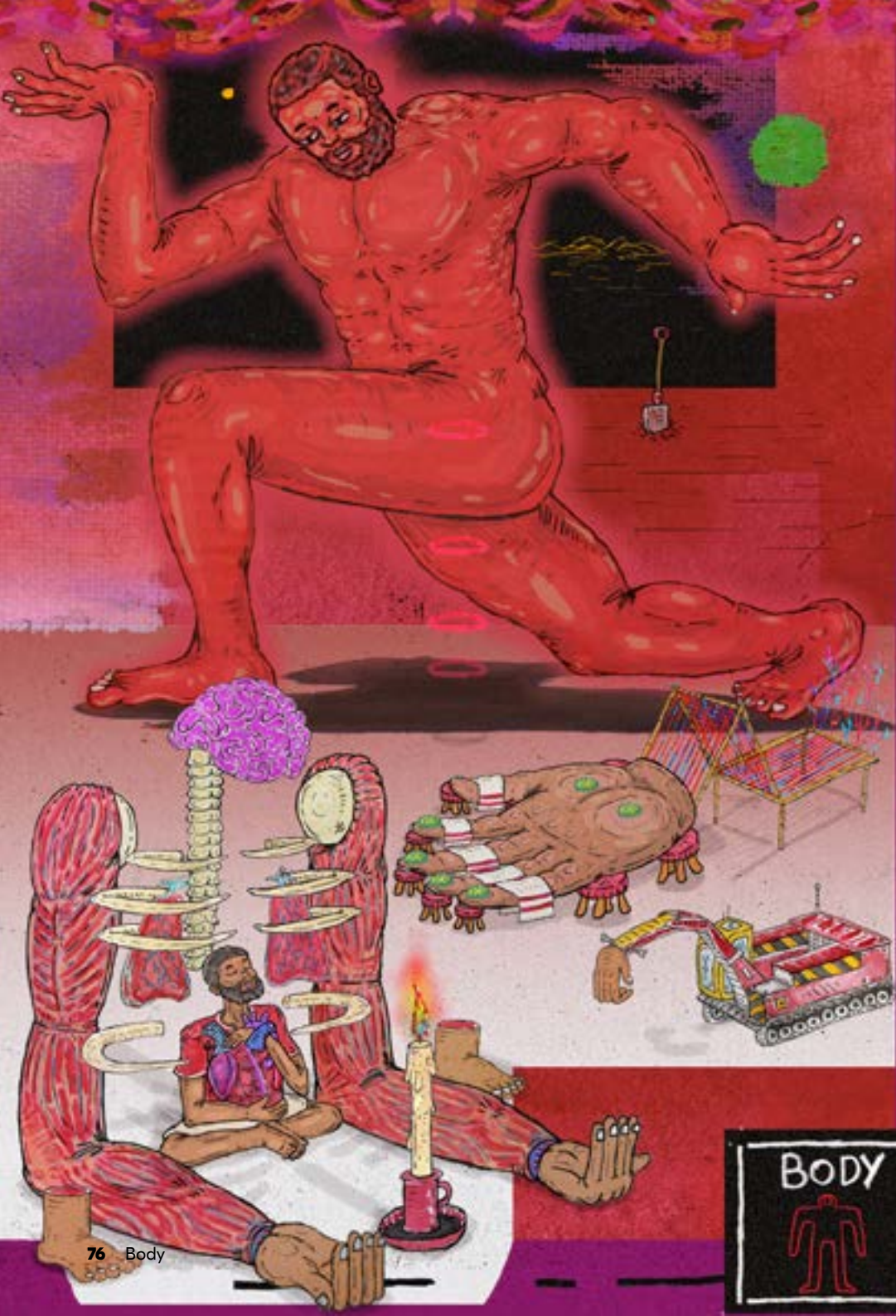
THINGS THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER

REFLECTING ON MY MIND, BODY AND SOUL TODAY

TODAY'S WATER INTAKE







Body

Your mind holds your spirit and your motivation to function, while your body holds your physical health and your ability to function. You may already have noticed some connection between the mind and body in the previous section.

When we think about the body and its health, we tend to think of exercise. Although this is important, Radical Self Care is about our connection and alignment with the body. Our mind is not the only thing that remembers our experiences. Your body too has its own memory. Caring for your body requires you to listen to it. Is it asking for movement or rest? Does it need nourishing, pampering or both?

You may have been taught to disregard what your body is trying to tell you, and that there is no option but to push through its feelings. Physical pain or discomfort may be ignored, depending on how an individual's culture disvalues or values these feelings.

On the other hand, in some cultures, emotional pain is expressed by what is felt physically. The relationship between physical discomfort and ethnicity is shaped by experience, learning and culture. Cultural factors influence beliefs, behaviour, perceptions and emotions, all of which have important implications for self care.

It's time to give your body the love and compassion it deserves.

Body Mapping

We can get so caught up in the stress of life that we don't realise we are in physical discomfort. Tense muscles, and pains in the back, shoulders, or feet, are just some of the ways our bodies communicate their current emotional state. Body Mapping is a good way to release physical tension we might not realise we're experiencing. Body Mapping involves paying attention to parts of the body and bodily sensations in a gradual sequence from feet to head.

By mentally mapping our physical sensations, we bring awareness to every single part of the body, noticing any aches, pains, tension, or general discomfort. The goal is not to relieve the pain completely, but to get to know and learn from it, in order to manage it better.

**The most important
locations on a map
are the places we
haven't visited yet**

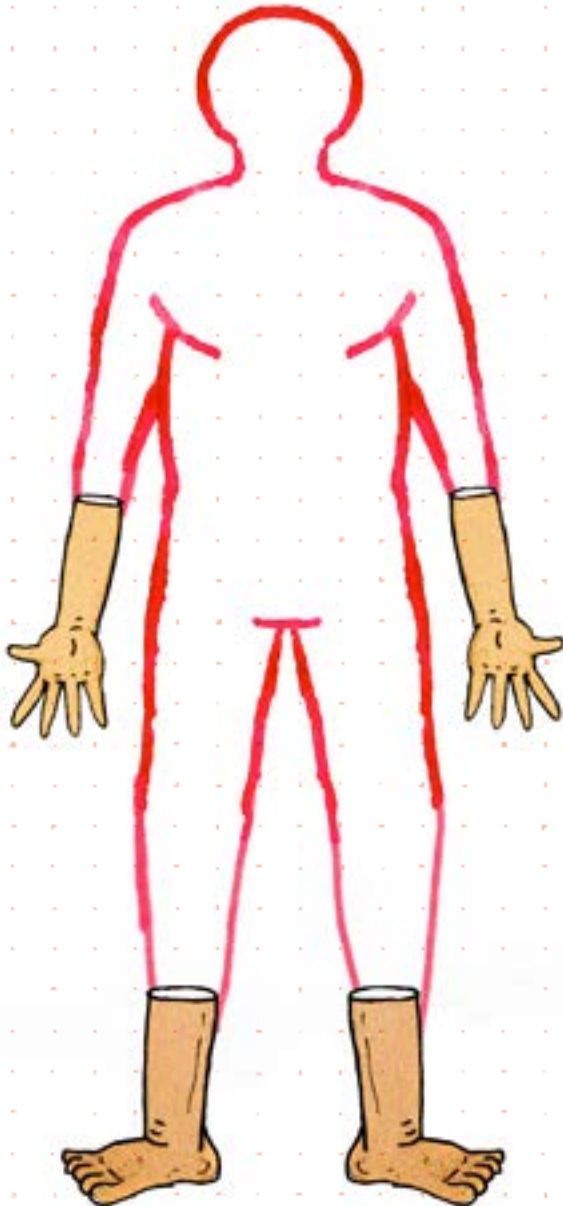


Try a body scan meditation

- 1 **Get comfortable.** Lying down is preferable, particularly if you're doing a body scan meditation before going to sleep. If that's not possible or relaxing, then sitting is also an option.
- 2 **Take a few deep breaths.** Let your breathing slow down and start breathing from your belly instead of from your chest, letting your abdomen expand and contract. If you find your shoulders rising and falling, focus more on breathing from your belly, as though a balloon is inflating and deflating in your abdomen.
- 3 **Bring awareness to your feet.** Now slowly bring your attention down to your feet. Begin observing sensations in your feet. If you notice pain, acknowledge it, along with any accompanying thoughts or emotions, and breathe gently through it.
- 4 **Breathe into the tension.** If you notice any uncomfortable sensations, focus your attention on them. Breathe into them and note any changes. Visualize the tension leaving your body through your breath and disappearing into the air. Move on when you feel ready.
- 5 **Scan your entire body.** Continue this practice with each area of your body, from your feet until you reach the top of your head. Notice how you feel, and where you're holding your stress. If there's any tightness, pain, or pressure, continue to breathe into what you're feeling. This can help you release tension in your body now, and be more aware of it in the future.

This exercise is useful to do with the young people you work with as a way of helping them to connect to themselves, and as part of their creative process.

Note the sensations you experienced on the diagram. Use these observations to keep track of, and tend to, your physical needs.





Touch

Touching activates the care system and the parasympathetic nervous system to help you calm down and feel safe. That is why physical self-soothing is a simple and effective way to comfort yourself in times of high anxiety or distress.

Place one or two hands over your heart. Breathe deeply while placing your attention on the rising and falling of your chest, the warmth and gentle pressure of your hands on your body, and the feeling that this practice offers.

If placing your hand over your heart feels uncomfortable, try some of the following alternatives.

- 1 Cradling your face in your hands.
- 2 Crossing your arms and giving yourself a hug or gentle squeeze.
- 3 Holding one hand on your abdomen, the other placed over your heart.

This exercise is a great way of calming young people when they feel overwhelmed, or when preparing for the day's work.





Bring your body to the movement

If you want to change the way you feel, the quickest way is to move your body. No, we are not talking about exercise. Any movement acts as a potent antidepressant, as moving the body can create different energetic states. For calmness, choose slower paced movement; to feel energised, choose something faster! Dot your week with joyful and loving movement to boost your feelings of well-being.

List ten ways you can move your body each week. Start with the slowest movement and build up to the fastest.



**Put on your
favourite track
and dance around
your room**



Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)

EFT is a technique that aims to help you release negative emotions and move past anything that feels like a blockage in your life. The technique involves tapping certain points on the body to create balance in your body's energy system – a kind of psychological acupuncture. According to its developer, Gary Craig, a disruption in energy is the cause of all negative emotion and experienced pain.

How does it work?

Similar to acupuncture, EFT focuses on meridian points, or energy hot spots, to restore balance to your body's energy. It is believed that restoring this energy balance can relieve the symptoms of negative experience or emotion.

Based on Chinese medicine, these meridian points are thought of as parts of the body that energy flows through – like the heart, lungs and bladder. These spots help balance energy flow to maintain your health. Any imbalance can influence disease or sickness. Practitioners of this technique believe tapping helps you access your body's energy and send signals to the part of the brain that controls stress. They claim that stimulating the meridian points through EFT tapping can reduce stress or negative emotion, ultimately restoring balance to your disrupted energy.



Firstly, ask yourself: what issue do I want to work on?

For example:

- How I'm feeling today
- A past memory that still bothers me
- A future event that I'm anxious about

Then ask yourself:

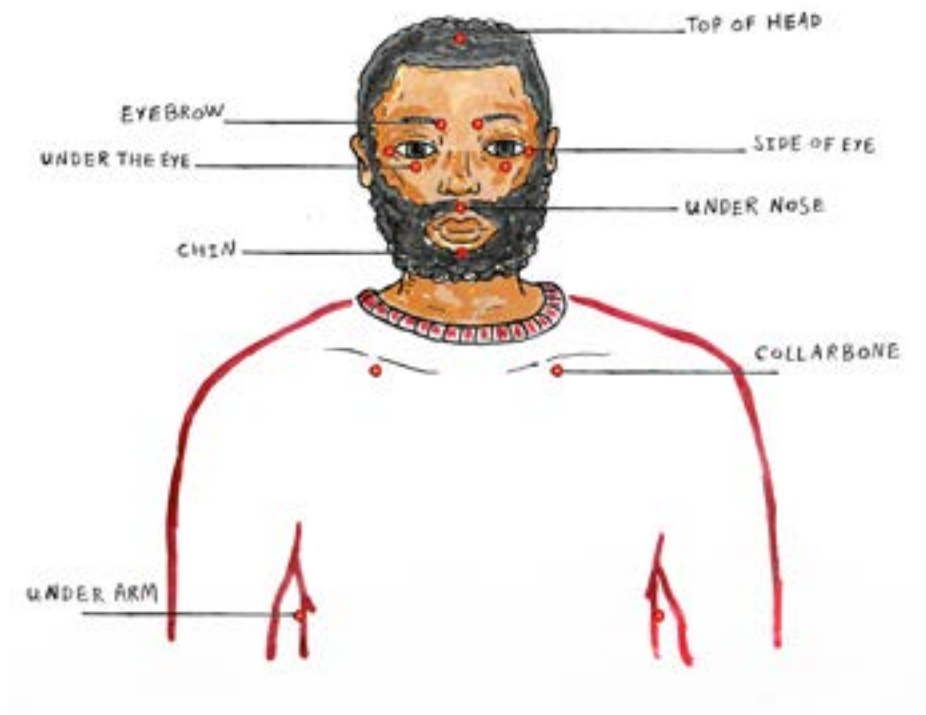
- When I think about this, how does it make me feel right now?
- What is the emotion I feel — anger, guilt, sadness, etc?

Then consider: **Where do I feel this in my body?**

What does it feel like? A racing heart? Tight chest? Clouded head? Churning stomach? Blocked throat?

And finally:

Using 0–10 as a gauge, what is the level of intensity of this emotion? (0 = nothing 10 = maximum intensity)



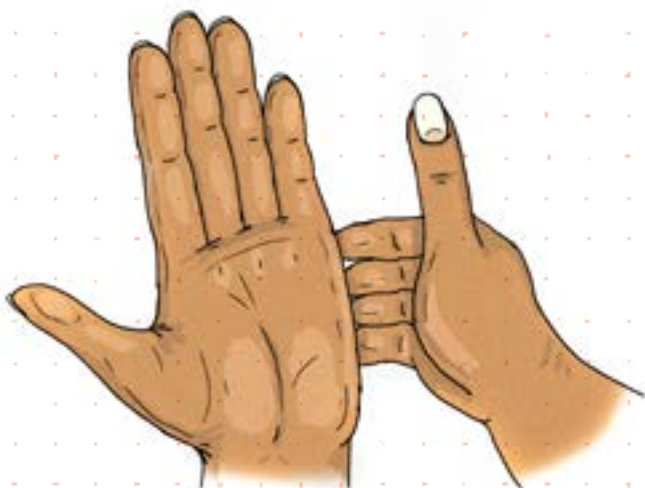
Tap on the Karate Chop point at the outer edge of your hand and say: "Even though I feel [insert emotion] I completely love and accept myself. Repeat this twice. Then tap all the tapping points in this sequence:

- | | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. TOP OF HEAD | 6. UNDER MOUTH | 11. SIDE OF 2ND FINGER |
| 2. INSIDE OF EYEBROW | 7. COLLAR BONE | 12. SIDE OF 3RD FINGER |
| 3. SIDE OF EYE | 8. UNDER ARM | 13. SIDE OF 4TH FINGER |
| 4. UNDER EYE | 9. SIDE OF THUMB | |
| 5. UNDER NOSE | 10. SIDE OF 1ST FINGER | |

While you are tapping on these points, focus on the emotions and the feelings in your body. Keep tapping and describing them. After tapping through a couple of sequences, keep tapping and state all your thoughts and feelings as if you are having a good vent! Then after another few sequences, when you start to feel calmer, keep tapping and ask yourself: What is the point of holding on to this emotion? What is the benefit? Tell yourself that it is time to let it go, that it is safe to let it go, that you are ready to let it go.

Take a few deep breaths and review how you are feeling now. If there is still an emotional intensity left, note the emotion, where you feel it in your body, and assess the intensity level again. Tap again as directed above.

At the end of your sequence, rate your intensity level on a scale from 0-10. Compare your results with your initial intensity level. Repeat daily, perhaps as part of your morning or evening routine, to help let go of built-up emotions. The key is to make it work for you, so experiment with different times of day, and see what feels good.





Walk as if you are kissing the earth with your feet

Go on a Beauty Walk. Choose a different route than usual, take off your shoes for a few steps. Now fill this page with all the beautiful things and feelings you saw and experienced. Express these observations on the blank page in a way that feels good to you!

Sometimes people need to sit around and do nothing!

Rest

If you are one of those people who do not have time for rest, then you are exactly the type of person who needs more of it! Knowing how busy you are, we wouldn't be surprised if thoughts about rest are quickly followed by worries about the things you are not doing or should be doing! Resting is often associated with guilt, laziness and wasting time. But rest is important, not just for us, but also for each other, to create a collective sense of well-being.

Many people consider rest and sleep to be one and the same – but rest is not the same as sleep. When you are sleeping, your body experiences changes that aid the overall recovery of all body parts. It is the altered phase of consciousness, where a person has no proper insight into the surrounding environment. You could say that sleep is a kind of well-organised and well-structured form of rest, as your body shuts down all unimportant functions and performs only mandatory functions. While sleeping, the body restarts itself, working to repair and rejuvenate, revitalise and heal.

Rest, however, is any activity that soothes, calms, and regulates your nervous system. It can be passive or active, with or without your eyes open. Rest is a conscious and wakeful state that involves your whole being, not just your body. It is when all the muscles, organs and the mind are at ease.

What constitutes rest is not the same for all of us. Some will consider sitting peacefully and enjoying the silence around you as rest, whilst others might see family time or listening to music as the ideal. There is no unified definition or criteria. It's personal!

Both sleep and rest allow the body to slow down in different ways. To fully recharge the body, and for feelings of well-being, periods of both are necessary.

Tips for Recognising the Need to Rest

Here are a few signs that your body needs rest:

- *EXHAUSTION*
- *DEHYDRATION*
- *LOSS OF APPETITE*
- *TROUBLE FOCUSING*
- *INABILITY TO MAKE DECISIONS*
- *EVERYTHING ANNOYS YOU*
- *SORE MUSCLES*

Some of the best ways to rest are simple and straightforward. The concept of rest relies on two things: that the time taken should be between 5 and 15 minutes, and that the frequency should be roughly every three to four hours of working.



Example:

Find a quiet spot in the home, or office, and have a seat. If you can lie down it's even nicer, but try not to fall asleep!

Simply close your eyes and breathe. Breathe in, breathe out. Listen to small sounds around you. Can you hear the birds, the traffic outside? How about the wind or rain? Enjoy them. Enjoy the small things in life. If you have a drink, sip it slowly and enjoy the flavours, the temperature, the heat or cool of your cup.

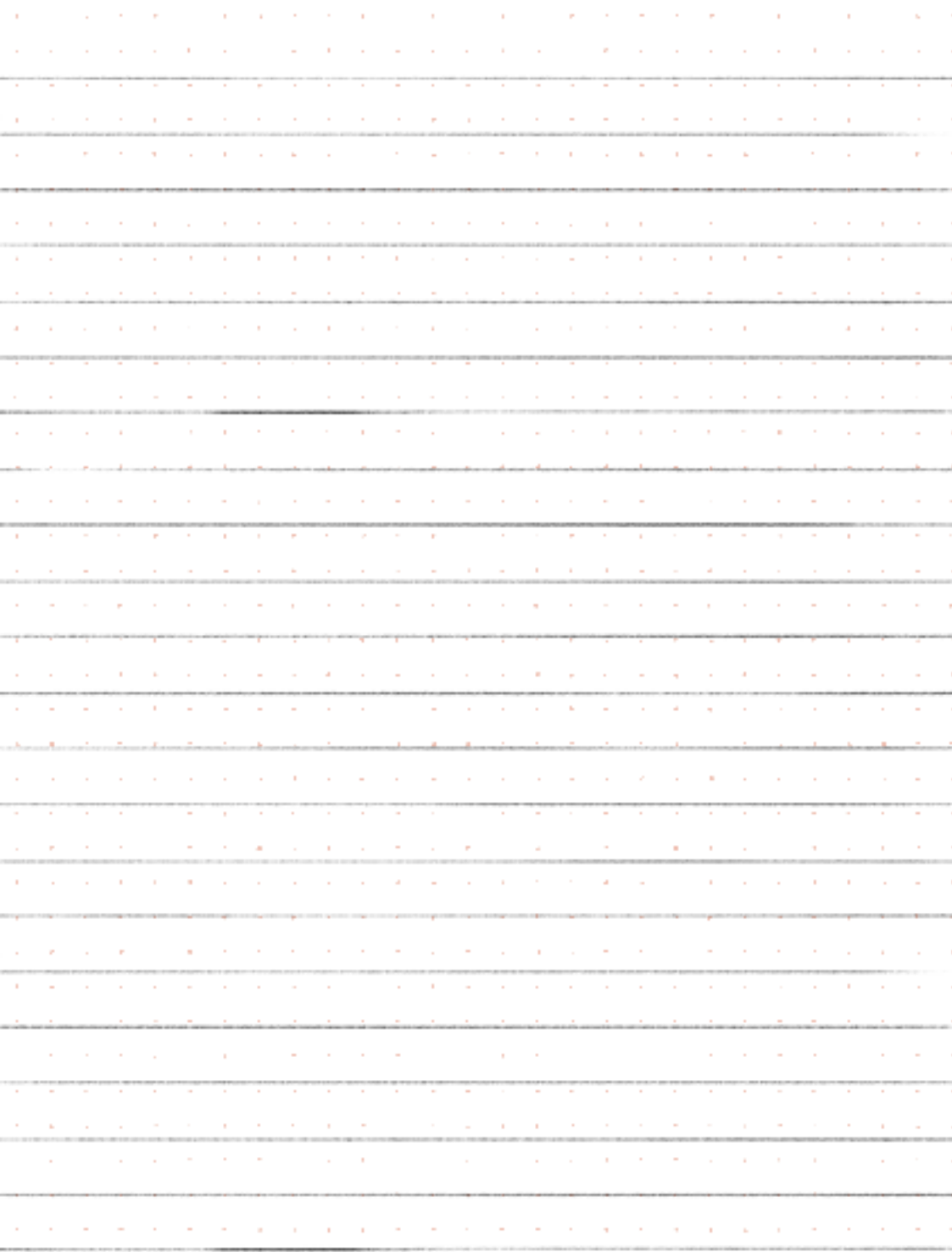
If you practice meditation, then you know this technique already, but not everyone finds meditation easy. This is about giving yourself some peace and quiet for a few minutes. The goal here is to rest and gather your thoughts for a quick energy boost, or to re-focus on your goals.

Have you been socialised to believe that resting is laziness or only something that's permitted when you've completed a long list of things to do? Maybe you grew up in a home where the concept of rest simply didn't exist. Where were your thoughts about rest formed? Were they societal or cultural?





Write some reflections on your thoughts or judgements about rest. What is your rest history?



Conscious breathing is my anchor

The Power of Breath

You may have noted that breath and breathing have been referenced throughout this journal. That's because breath is a powerful force: without it there is no life. When we breathe better, we feel better. Working with breath is the ultimate self care tool, as breathing plays such a vital role in how we think, feel, rest and recover.

Come into a comfortable seated position where you can connect with your breath for a moment. When you are ready, close your eyes or soften your gaze. Drop your day from your shoulders, and feel the natural rhythm of your breath.

Place your hands on your abdomen. You may notice that your fingers separate and lift with each inhalation and gently retract back to your centre with each exhalation. Feel how breathing into your belly can be soothing. Speak the affirmation. **I am calm.**

Next, place your hands on the sides of your ribcage and sense how your hands move here. Notice how breathing into this hand placement can help you feel more centred. Speak the affirmation. **I am focused.**

Lastly, bring your fingertips to your collarbones and allow your breath to move up into them. Feel how breathing into your hands here can be uplifting. Speak the affirmation. **I am energetic.**

You can check in with your breath at any point of the day or night using this process, to cultivate how you want to feel.

Nourish to Flourish

There is an important link between what we eat and how we feel. The link between diet and emotions stems from the close relationship between your brain and your gastrointestinal tract, which is sometimes called the “second brain.”

Here’s how it works: Your GI tract is home to billions of bacteria that influence the production of chemical substances carrying messages from the gut to the brain. Two common examples of these chemicals are dopamine and serotonin.

Eating nutritionally dense food promotes the growth of “good” bacteria, which in turn positively affect the production of these chemicals. When production is optimal, your brain receives the positive messages loud and clear, but when production goes awry, so does your mood!

When you nourish yourself with a diet of nutrient-rich foods, you’re setting yourself up for fewer mood swings and symptoms of depression and anxiety, as well as an improved ability to focus.



Tips for Nourishment:

- EAT REGULARLY. WHEN YOUR BLOOD SUGAR LEVELS DROP YOU CAN FEEL TIRED AND MOODY.
- STAY HYDRATED. EVEN MILD DEHYDRATION CAN AFFECT YOUR MOOD, ENERGY LEVEL, AND ABILITY TO CONCENTRATE.
- EAT THE RIGHT BALANCE OF FATS. YOUR BRAIN NEEDS HEALTHY FATS TO KEEP WORKING WELL. THEY'RE FOUND IN FOODS SUCH AS OLIVE OIL, RAPESEED OIL, NUTS, SEEDS, OILY FISH, AVOCADOS, MILK AND EGGS. AVOID TRANS FATS - OFTEN FOUND IN PROCESSED OR PACKAGED FOODS - AS THEY CAN BE BAD FOR YOUR MOOD AND YOUR HEART HEALTH.
- INCLUDE MORE WHOLE GRAINS, FRUITS AND VEGETABLES IN YOUR DIET. THEY CONTAIN THE VITAMINS AND MINERALS YOUR BRAIN AND BODY NEED TO STAY WELL.
- INCLUDE SOME PROTEIN WITH EVERY MEAL. IT CONTAINS AN AMINO ACID THAT YOUR BRAIN USES TO HELP REGULATE YOUR MOOD.
- LOOK AFTER YOUR GUT HEALTH. YOUR GUT CAN REFLECT HOW YOU'RE FEELING: IT CAN SPEED UP OR SLOW DOWN IF YOU'RE STRESSED. HEALTHY FOODS FOR YOUR GUT INCLUDE FRUIT, VEGETABLES, BEANS AND PROBIOTICS.
- BE AWARE OF HOW CAFFEINE CAN AFFECT YOUR MOOD. IT CAN CAUSE SLEEP PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IF YOU DRINK IT CLOSE TO BEDTIME, AND SOME PEOPLE FIND IT MAKES THEM IRRITABLE AND ANXIOUS TOO. CAFFEINE IS FOUND IN COFFEE, TEA, COLA, ENERGY DRINKS AND CHOCOLATE.

Mindful Eating

Eating is so often reduced to biting, chewing and swallowing – but it is one of the most pleasurable experiences we can engage in as human beings. Eating mindfully goes beyond the necessity of nutrition, and transforms into a more subtle but deeply satisfying sensation, bringing full attention to our bodies, and producing feelings of being truly alive.

Try to make time to eat: move away from your desk, computers, laptops and phones.

Breathe before eating: by pausing to breathe before you eat, you allow yourself to slow down and the time to transition to the ritual of eating. Bring your attention inward by closing your eyes and take 8 to 10 slow breaths before you start your meal.

Awareness: bring your awareness to the physical sensations in your stomach. On a scale of 1 to 10, (from no physical sensation of hunger to very hungry), ask yourself “How hungry am I?” What physical sensations tell you that you are hungry or not hungry (emptiness, shakiness, no desire to eat, stomach growling, etc.)? Try not to think about when you last ate, or what time it is. Listen to your body, not your thoughts.

Tune in: now that you are in touch with how hungry you are, you can choose more mindfully what, when, and how much to eat. This simple practice can help you tune in to your needs.

Take your first three bites mindfully: experience the taste, flavours, smells, textures, and notice how much enjoyment you are receiving from a certain food. Make a mindful choice about what to eat based on what you really enjoy.

I give myself permission to live



Positive Body List

A Positive Body list is anything that you love about your body and can do for yourself.

Give space and time to how you feel



There are no correct ways to answer these questions. They are simply an invitation for self-reflection where it may feel helpful. Answer as many as you want, however you like.

DATE: TODAY MY MIND IS

TODAY MY BODY IS

TODAY MY SOUL IS

TODAY'S COMMITMENT TO MYSELF IS

HOW WAS MY ENERGY TODAY?

THINGS I DID WELL

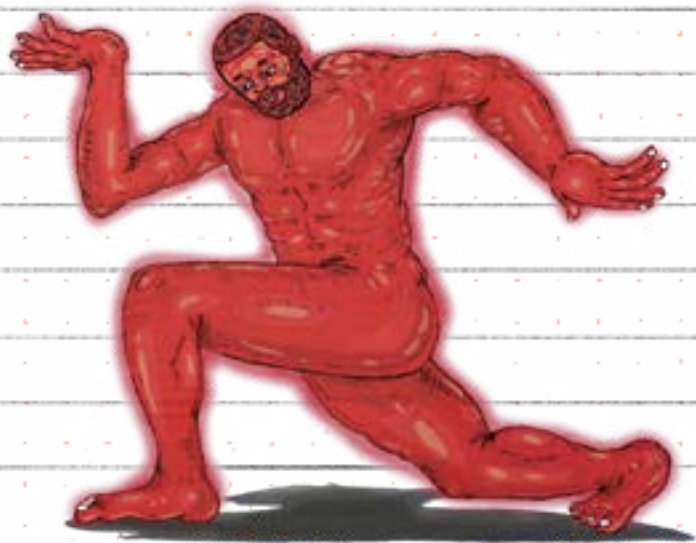
THINGS THAT COULD HAVE GONE BETTER

REFLECTING ON MY MIND, BODY AND SOUL TODAY

TODAY'S WATER INTAKE









SOUL



Soul

Soul care for self care is not about practicing religion, although faith practice can be part of it. It is about caring for your inner being, the essence of who you are on the inside – and feeling more connected to your world and to humanity.

For your soul to radiate health, it needs regular nourishment, time to pause and reflect, self-compassion, and connection to yourself and those around you. Basically everything you have been focusing on throughout your journal! When the self, mind, body and soul are brought together they reaffirm that you are a very complex, unique and special being. Caring for all four entities determines your overall health and promotes a sense of harmony within as well as an understanding of yourself as a whole person.

[Please note: We are using the word “soul” here to capture something difficult to express - you may prefer to think of it as your identity or inner being, your essence or sense of self]

Soul Purpose

Your life purpose can mean the thing you do that gives your life meaning, Your soul purpose is the expression of your natural light, remembering the truth of who you are, and sharing that with the world. Both are beneficial. Knowing your soul purpose can be immensely meaningful, powerful, and fulfilling because it represents who you are and the things that express who you are, not what you do.

Finding your soul purpose is the ability to find more of the true essence of you. To let go of what is not you, so you can allow the authentic you to shine. Allowing your soul purpose to reveal itself is more about being than doing. It involves being more of yourself and letting go of old distortions that hide the real you. When you let go of those layers of distortion, you allow your soul's essence to fully express its self.

Finding your soul's purpose is about asking questions that bring you home to the person you were meant to be. Some people know early on what their soul's purpose is, but for others, it takes time and experimentation.



Here are a few things you can ask yourself to help your thoughts around finding your soul's purpose:

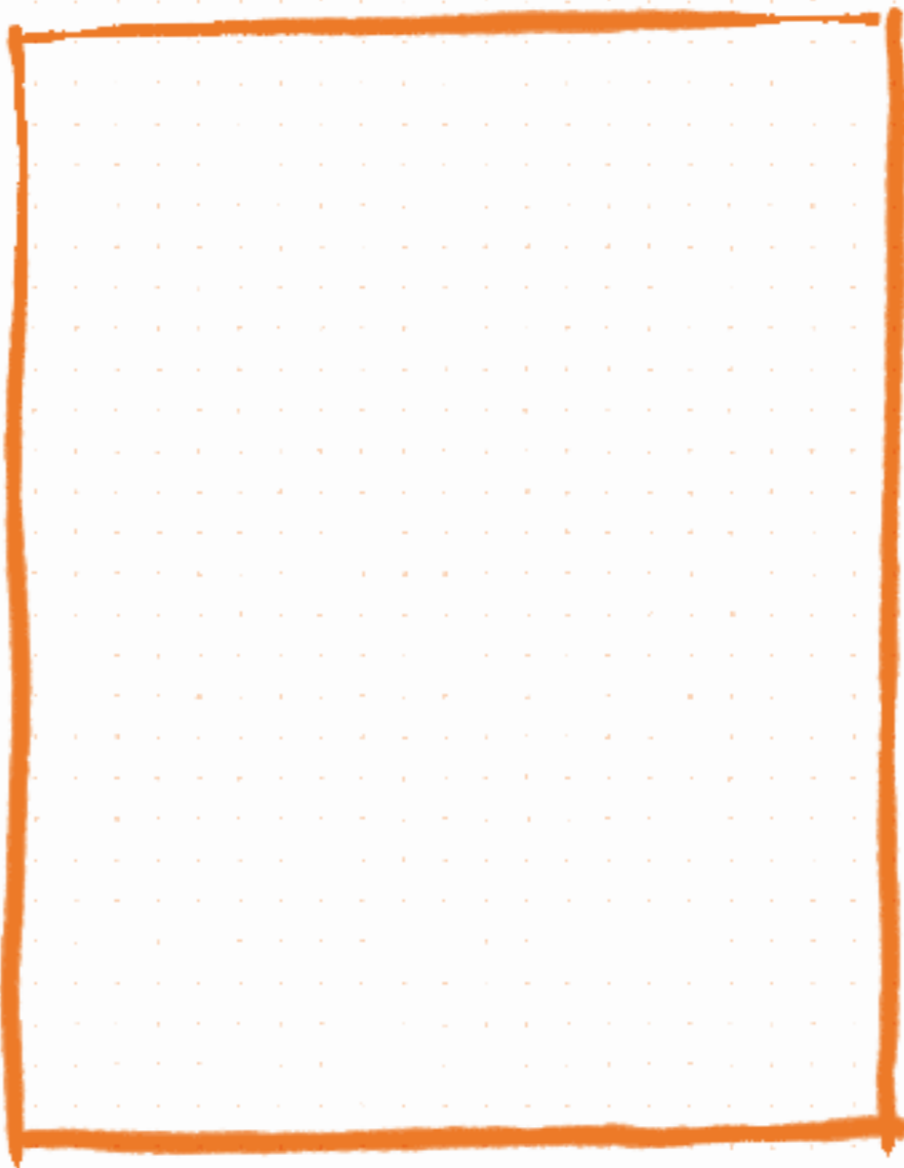
- What am I good at?
- What brings me joy?
- What part of my day is joyful?
- What in my life no longer serves me—emotionally, physically, and spiritually?
- Have I had any incidents that have served as wake-up calls for me?
- Who are my role models and icons?
- What do I often teach others?
- What are my dreams and desires?
- How do I help others transform?





Practice the art of gratitude

Adorn this page with words, colours, glitter or pictures of all the things, people or places that you are grateful for. Use this page as a quick reminder of the positive things in your life when you are feeling down.





Moan Moan Moan...

You might not be surprised to learn that consistent complaining can lead to increased unhappiness. To be fair, totally avoiding complaining is not an easy or completely useful task, as that would inhibit self-expression and destroy all the good work you have been doing! But as an exercise, why not challenge yourself to a complaint free day or week? Make a note of all the valid things you moan about at work. Note your observations on how this worked out for you. How did you feel? Did you rush to find a solution? Make notes on the opposite page.

Cultivating Joy

Joy is often confused with happiness. Although they are closely linked, and can be experienced at the same time, they are quite different. Happiness is an outward expression or emotion, whilst joy is a much stronger feeling, cultivated internally. It arrives when you make peace with who you are.

What is considered to be normal is really only what is known. We can change the human condition by searching for the joy within.

Tips for Cultivating Joy

- CUT DOWN ON SOCIAL MEDIA AND INCORPORATE MORE FUN IN YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES.
- PRACTICE GRATITUDE, FOCUSING ON THE THINGS THAT YOU ARE THANKFUL FOR.
- LIVE WITHIN YOUR TRUTH.
- SURROUND YOURSELF WITH PEOPLE WHO MOTIVATE YOU AND CHEER YOU ON.
- STOP COMPARING YOURSELF TO OTHERS.
- FIND THE BEAUTY IN LIFE'S SIMPLE AND MOST MUNDANE MOMENTS.
- EXPLORE AND FIND NEW WAYS TO CREATE, PLAY AND BRING OUT YOUR INNER CHILD.
- FIND CONNECTION WITH OTHERS.
- GET OUT INTO NATURE.
- LET HAPPINESS IN AND FILTER THE OTHER STUFF OUT.

**Use this page to make a “Joy Collage.”
Use wrappers, discarded items found in your bags,
pockets – anything you can give new meaning to.**



Mandalas for the soul

Mandalas are considered sacred in Tibetan Buddhism and are used in religious rituals. They are thought of as “containers of essence” and are widely recognized as meaningful reflections of their creators. **Mandala art therapy can be a great source of reflection on one’s soul.**

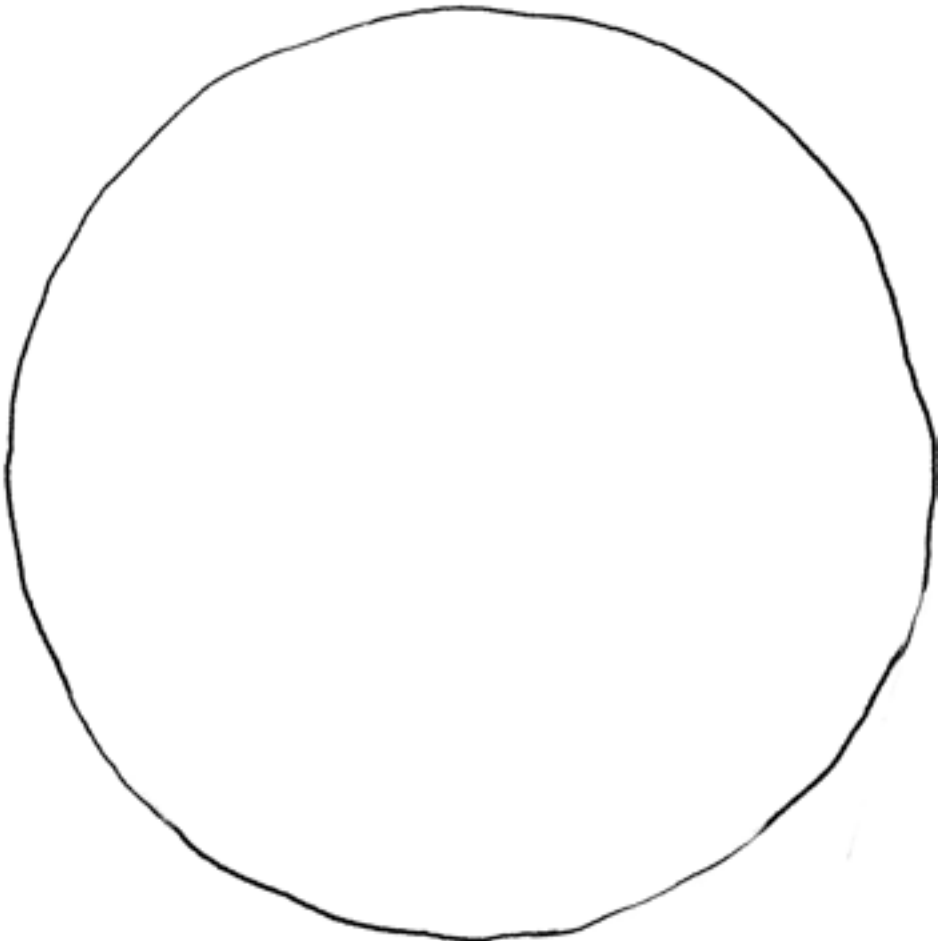
Colouring can reduce stress by drawing your attention to a concrete and repetitive activity. This increases your focus and activates portions of your parietal lobe which are connected to your sense of self and soul. Incidentally, these are the very same areas that are active during meditation and prayer. When you choose different colours, or types of implements (e.g., markers vs. crayons) the parts of the parietal lobe that control both vision and creativity become active.





Create a mandala in the circle below. Fill it with patterns colours and symbols. The centre of the mandala should represent the core of who you are. Moving outwards, the mandala should represent the support, or things you have around you.

Creating your own mandala can be great for centering, meditation, and soothing self-expression.





Don't dream cheap, dreaming is free

When you dare to dream, you are actively giving yourself permission to expand on life and its experiences. Daring to dream brings hope, creativity, and change, both to you the individual, and to the work you do. It helps you to set and achieve goals, experience failure, and dream anew.

List 10 things you dare to dream both personal and professionally.

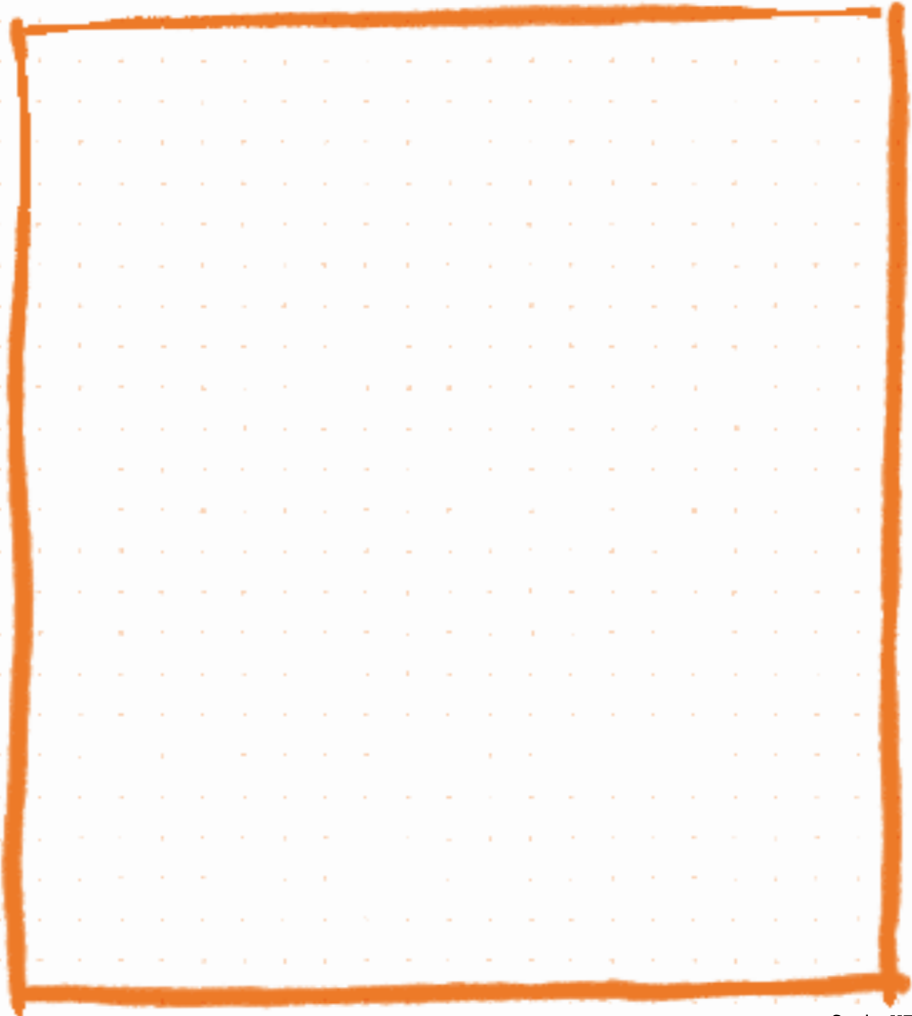




Doodling

Doodling is a spontaneous artform which allows you to get in touch with your own innate creativity. The added bonus is that it can calm a busy mind and bring it back to a more peaceful, restful space. Doodling can also help to access the body's healing wisdom, allowing your spirit to rest, recover and regroup.

Use the blank page to doodle. Remember that there is no right or wrong way to do this – simply let go of your temptation to control the outcome.





If you look at the people in your circle and they don't inspire joy, love and connection, then you don't have a circle, you have a box

Stick a picture of you and a friend on this page. Underneath, write about this friendship, focusing on how it feeds your soul.



De-clutter.

Choose a place – your email inbox, or your wardrobe – and get rid of the junk!

Decluttering may not sound like the most exciting form of self care. But clearing out your space, life or mind can have a positive impact on your physical and mental well-being. Making decluttering part of your self care routine helps to reduce decision fatigue, stress levels and irritability. It also contributes to feelings of mastery, achievement, and your ability to say 'No'. Maybe what you want to let go of is not a thing, but a person. What needs to go to improve your quality of life?

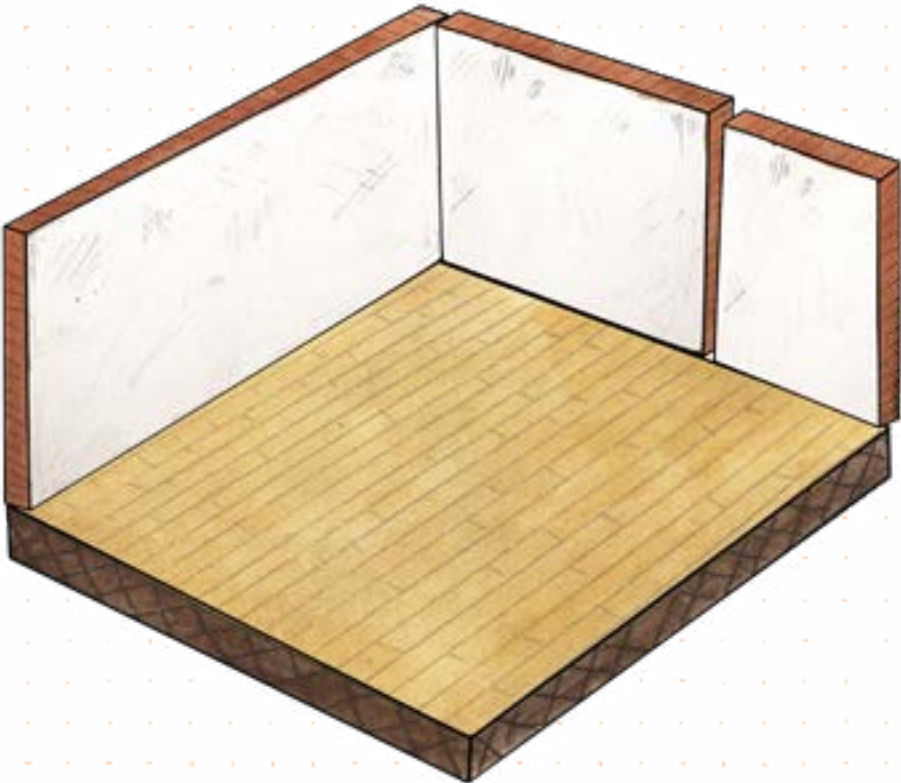




Your environment is a reflection of who you are

What environment helps you to work more efficiently? Some of us benefit from order or minimalist spaces, some of us like inspiring photos, quotes, and decorations spread across every inch of our walls. Your environment directly impacts the joy you feel. Take a look at your environments, both at home and at work: how can you change your work or home environment, so it highlights what brings you joy and is good for your soul.

Decorate the walls of this room in any way you want.



Releasing Happy Hormones

Oxytocin

(The love one)

Listen to your favourite song.
Receive a massage.
Cuddle a pet.
Ask for and receive a hug.

Serotonin

(The happy one)

Go out into the morning
sunshine.
Take a walk in nature.
Be creative.
Meditate.

Dopamine

(The pleasure chemicals)

Receive a professional
massage.
Eat well.
Get enough sleep.
Listen to music.

Endorphin

(The stress and pain reliever)

Move your body.
Laugh.
Eat chocolate (dark).
Eat spicy food.





Living for tomorrow? But what about today?

The following exercise is a great way to bring you back into the present moment and acknowledge how you are feeling right now. Once you've completed these statements, say them all out loud. Practise daily to remind you of your present emotions and physical being.

Today

I FEEL

I WISH

I THINK

I NEED

I HOPE

I WANT

I HAVE

I CAN

I WILL

I BRING



Positive Soul List

A positive soul list is anything that makes you happy



You are a star

Sit on the floor with your legs comfortably crossed in front of you. Open your left hand, and extend it slightly in front of you so it looks like an open starfish. Take your right hand and extend your pointer finger. Beginning with your left thumb, take your right pointer finger and go up the outside of the thumb while taking a deep breath in. Go down the inside of the thumb and breathe out deeply. Continue the deep breathing in while going up each finger and exhaling when going down each finger. Once you are finished, switch hands and repeat.



Celebrate Yourself

When was the last time you took a moment to celebrate yourself? If you struggle with this notion, you aren't alone. Congratulating or celebrating the self is often seen as arrogance, but actually, it's at the heart of self-love, which activates the soul and helps you hear your inner joy.

How can you celebrate yourself Every day?



Here are some examples:

- List your daily accomplishments.
- Give yourself healthy rewards for things you have done well.
- Congratulate yourself on your strengths.
- Identify ways you are accomplishing your soul's purpose.
- Find joy in the best moments of your day.
- Don't wait until you've reached your goals to be proud of yourself. Celebrate every step along the way.
- Spend one minute every day celebrating your life.

Now add some of your own suggestions...



I Love Myself!

Yes. You heard right! Write down a list of all the things that you love about yourself.



I am a beautiful butterfly, I am free..

Sit on the floor with the bottoms of your feet touching and your knees bent out to the sides. Put your hands on your ankles, and gently bounce your knees as if you are flapping butterfly wings. Close your eyes and take slow, deep breaths, in and out. Imagine you are a butterfly, flying to your favourite place in the whole world. Imagine what it looks like. What do you see? What do you hear? What does it feel like? Imagine you are flying around, happy and calm. Now it is time to fly home. Slowly flap your wings. Take a deep breath in, and a long exhale. Now gently open your eyes.

This exercise is useful to do with the young people you work with as a way of helping them to connect to themselves, and as part of their creative process.





Further Resources

Mental health support:

www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Whether you have anxiety, stress, anxiety-based depression, or a phobia that's affecting your daily life, they're there to help.

cwrise.com/

local emotional health wellbeing support.

www.headstogether.org.uk

tackling stigma and changing the conversation on mental health

www.lgbt.foundation

mentalhealth.org.nz/conditions

www.mind.org.uk

www.minded.org.uk

a free educational resource on children, young people, adults and older people's mental health

www.mindful.org

www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/mental-health

Identifying, treating and managing mental health problems and disorders

www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/

parentsandyouthinfo.aspx drugs & alcohol, depression, anxiety, ADHD, stress, mental health, sleep and more.

www.rethink.org

Mental illness including Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic specific support

www.samaritans.org

www.supportline.org.uk

confidential emotional support to children, young adults and adults by telephone, email and post

www.warwickshire.gov.uk/

sorted Self-help books on lots of topics available from libraries

For Young people:

www.annafreud.org

Anna Freud is a world-leading mental health charity for children and families.

www.acamh.org/learning/

aim to raise standards in the understanding and management of child mental health issues.

www.brave-online.com

designed for children and teens who want to learn how to reduce stress and anxiety, and improve their mood

www.childline.org.uk

hatw.co.uk

not-for-profit organisation that raises awareness of depression and self-harm in young people.

www.kooth.com

Online mental wellbeing support, free, safe, anonymous

www.papyrus-uk.org

Suicide prevention
0800 068 4141

www.stem4.org.uk

(app available) — teenage mental health — depression & anxiety, self harm, eating disorders, addiction

www.therapycomics.com

uses comics instead of text to look at mental health issues

www.youngminds.org.uk

Bullying, anger, abuse, eating problems, self-harm, problems at school, sleep problems

Apps:

Calm

www.calm.com

Headspace

www.headspace.com

Mindshift

www.anxietycanada.com/articles/new-mindshift-cbt-app-gives-canadians-free-anxiety-relief/

Moodgym

moodgym.com.au

Safe Spot

safespot.org.uk

SAM

mindgarden-tech.co.uk

Smiling Mind

www.smilingmind.com.au

What'sUp?

www.thewhatsupapp.co.uk

Worry Tree

www.worry-tree.com/worrytree-mobile-app

This journal is dedicated to friend and founder member of De la Soul, David Jolicoeur aka Trugoy The Dove, aka Plug Two or simply Dave to his friends who brought so much radical creativity and joy to the global community. Gone but never forgotten.

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www.anewdirection.org.uk

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**“Know thyself, for once
we know ourselves,
we may learn how
to care for ourselves”**

Socrates